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ABSTRACT

The paper describes the theoretical foundations of a project which would provide special education for gifted bilingual students in grades 6, 7, and 8. Major components of the project are: procedures for identifying gifted bilingual students, curriculum needs of these students, and the role of the teacher. A multiple assessment procedure (including questionnaires, parent conferences, teacher evaluation, and peer information) is recommended to identify the bilingual student whose intellectual or creative ability is above average and the underachieving gifted bilingual student. Stressed is the need to observe the "problem child" for possible giftedness and the importance of testing bilingual students in their primary language. The curriculum recommended is based on a humanistic philosophy of education and an instructional model which blends the following three strategies: mastery teaching, the confluent theory of education (which integrates the affective with the cognitive domain), and implications of the right and left hemispheres on learning modalities. The sequential introduction of major concepts, some room for individual initiative, and frequent individual conferences are stressed. The project recognizes the importance of the teacher by providing opportunities for continued professional development of project teachers. (DB)

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Title Page

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Strategies for Identification and Academic Development of the Gifted/Talented Bilingual Student

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My address this morning is a presentation of the project which I developed specifically for Gifted Bilingual students. The three major components of this project are:

1st. The procedures for identifying Gifted Bilingual Students

2nd. The curriculum needs of the Gifted Bilingual Student

3rd. The teacher, who is the single most important factor in education.

Part of the motivation for this project resulted from my years of experience teaching Hispanic students; however greater motivation came from my observation of the programs developed for Bilingual students. I observed that for the most part Community effort, educational practice and Federal monies were almost solely directed toward NES/LES Programs. The purpose of these programs was to develop English language competency while presenting the subjects of math, social studies and science in the primary language. The long term objective of these efforts was for equal opportunities in the social, economic and political sector.

It is not my purpose to criticize what has happened during these years of emphasis on bilingual education. I would like, however, to share with you my observation of what has happened in education since the Lau decision of 1974.

1st. The English language competency currently achieved by students in the upper elementary grades has failed to provide upward mobility for the majority of students. Quite frankly, the educational achievement of these students insures little more than an advanced labor force in our society. In reality, the social stratification of our students has not been impressively altered.

2nd. Of more importance is the fact that educational programs, specifically for the gifted Bilingual student, have never really been considered. At best, the system has allowed for an automatic inclusion of 2% of the minorities into programs for the gifted. These considerations are what really initiated my project.

I will now begin with my first topic, "Procedures for identifying Gifted Bilingual Students". In my proposal I attempt to identify two types of students:

1st. The gifted bilingual student whose intellectual or creative ability is above average;

2nd. The underachieving gifted student whose ability has been totally or partially obscured by socio-economic or emotional problems.

The criteria and the procedures for identification involves multiple assessment. Through questionnaires, parent conferencing, teacher evaluation and peer information, effort is made to understand the child in terms of his total reality. The IQ score is not the single most important criteria used for selecting students. The purpose of these procedures is to identify students with creative potential, qualities of leadership, as well as students with above-average ability.

In regards to the identification of the underachieving gifted student these considerations are important.

1st. Parents, school principal and particularly teachers should critically observe those students who according to traditional norms seem to be atypical of mentally gifted students. We must give serious consideration

to the "problem child". Often times the child with a discipline problem, unacceptable social behavior or even low academic achievement is at times a non-identified gifted student whose inability to cope with our present educational system has evolved into what we sometimes irresponsibly label as a "problem child".

In the past decade the stability and tranquility of the home and community environments have changed radically. Consequently many of the students in our classrooms are diamonds in the rough. Their nurturing environments have often been very difficult - in some cases even inadequate. As a result, many of our students have an untapped potential which we have the responsibility to discover. To do this we need to depart from the traditional modes and practices used to identify gifted students. I want to stress this point because for many bilingual students, school has been an unpleasant or frustrating experience. These students have swelled the ranks of the "problem child" in our schools today. We must do all that is possible to prevent this misidentification.

2nd. Research with gifted children repeatedly confirms and emphasizes that above-average reading ability and highly developed verbal skills are definite norms of giftedness. Therefore, bilingual students should be carefully tested in their primary language for exceptional reading ability and verbal skills. This is the second factor to be aware of when screening for gifted bilingual students.

At this time I cannot address the topic of appropriate tests or testing procedures in the primary language; this is a whole topic in itself. However, I do stress that even when a test has been selected

and used appropriately, the final score must not be accepted as Gospel. We must observe the student in various situations. Many times wit, humor or imagination are discovered in his or her peer relations. It is also useful to note when and if a student is relied upon to act as a translator in any situation that requires a great deal of verbal communication. Taking notice of the student's choice of library books in his primary language is also important. Not only is the quality of the material meaningful -- by this I mean reading and comprehension difficulty -- but even more so is the content. The workings of the student's mind, his mental maturity, is revealed in the subjects that he chooses to read or to browse through.

One final word before I proceed to the topic of the appropriate curriculum. Much discussion in linguistic classes focuses on "language switching", that is, the use of two languages in a given sentence or within a single conversation. When you observe language switching or you observe the natural flow of a sentence being interrupted with a word in the primary language or even the second language, it does not necessarily indicate "language deficiency". Reflect for a moment on the possibility that the "other" language was included by direct intention, not because of an inability to maintain conversation in one language. Consider the possibility that the inserted word or idea might really have greater precision of thought or emotion in the language reverted to.

These procedures when used in screening for gifted bilingual students will certainly broaden the spectrum of students in our gifted classrooms, and at the same time will undoubtedly reduce the numbers of our mislabeled or negatively identified student population.

Developing the second part of the project regarding the curriculum and the classroom environment for gifted bilingual students was a task far more challenging than I had at first anticipated.

I went through a process of trial and error, stages of planning and replanning. Each time I was refining the objectives of the program, but above all I believe I was clarifying the philosophy of education which would be the rationale for whatever was to happen in the classroom.

I did what I thought was most logical. I sent out scores of letters to publishing companies requesting any and all types of materials available and appropriate for the program.

The next step was to visit the programs for mentally gifted students in the neighboring school districts.

The classrooms I visited and the materials which I reviewed were all project oriented, such as projects in advanced math, skill activities in deductive and inductive reasoning, writing of Hikus in poetry class, etc. These activities although very good themselves failed to address a serious need not only in the education of the gifted but also in the whole of education today.

Based upon my experience, I have felt that what is lacking in education is:

1st. A master plan of education based on a sound theory of education.

2nd. An appropriate curriculum and methodology of instruction consistent with that theory of education.

The first need, that of a master plan based on a sound theory of education, directed my efforts toward an in-depth study of the theories of education developed from the field of psychology. However, before I could choose a particular theory of education for my project,

I first had to arrive at an appropriate definition of education.

I quickly dismissed the definition that the sum total of education is the transference of a body of knowledge from teacher to pupil. The evolution or perhaps the "revolution" of new ideas is too great for even the most gifted to assimilate during a whole lifetime; therefore, I did not want a program that would merely be quantitatively superior.

A definition of education whose objective is the total preparation of man for life in a particular environment was a concept of education more consistent with my objectives. This definition enabled me to place the focus of my curriculum upon qualitative materials. It freed me from any pressure to achieve Olympain feats in terms of quantitative accomplishments. With this definition in mind I reviewed three theories of education.

The first theory was that of Freud. He developed his theory out of clinical practice rather than the laboratory. This theory places major emphasis on biological determinism and life history as the crucial factors in human development. Freud asserts that within man there is a conflict between the id and the superego. The ego is the force caught between these two forces. Satisfactory development of the ego implies the strength to counterbalance these two forces.

The Behaviorist theory, developed by B.F. Skinner, describes education in terms of what is totally objective; the classroom environment, teaching reinforcement and teaching methodology. The basic postulate is that if we scientifically control everything exterior to the learner, learning will naturally follow. This theory does not consider either the physiological or the psychological controls within the learner.

A substantially different point of view is asserted by the

Humanists, one of whose chief proponents is Carl Rogers. The key to their philosophy is the recognition of the human phenomena. Considering as they do that human beings endow their actions with meaning, the act of education cannot ignore the inner reality of the learner. For the Humanists, self-expression is not predetermined by biological drives, childhood history or even the exigencies of the environment. They recnogize man's freedom, his personal and individual vision of reality. They recognize his freedom to choose and the subsequent responsibility for his choices.

This Humanist theory is the one I have accepted as the rationale for my project. I could not do otherwise. The inner reality, the inner being, the inner experience of my students is what has been most important for me during my years of teaching.

I believe that especially in the case of our bilingual population we have to reach into their inner world. We have to understand them from the inside out before we begin to structure programs for them, be they quantitative or qualitative. Authors such as John Holt in How Children Fail and Jonathan Kosel in Death at an Early Age are quite intuitive. They clearly recognize the need to understand a student's inner reality.

The next task after deciding upon a specific philosophy of education was to develop an appropriate curriculum and methodology of instruction.

The curriculum of the project is based upon a master plan of education that will span three years of intensive educational development.

The program starts with grade 6 and continues on through the remaining years of junior high school or grades 7 and 8. During the

four years of high school the project teachers guide the students in their program selection and also toward whatever opportunities are available on high school campus or in the community. On campus, participation in science clubs such as Mensa or Forensic clubs in English or Spanish could be encouraged as excellent extra curricular activities.

The project teachers are also committed to individual conferencing with the student, his parents and his high school teachers every 12 weeks or a minimum of 3 times during each year of high school. As the student approaches senior high, he is given more specific counseling in terms of his career ambitions. Finally after graduation, the last and final responsibility of the project teacher is to aid each student in obtaining a full or partial scholarship, a fellowship, or if the student has need, help and direction is given in obtaining a student loan from the government to insure his college education.

As for the selection of the curriculum content and the decision regarding classroom activities, every effort was made to maintain coherence and consistency with the underlying philosophy of the project. The content of study would not be an arbitrary selection of new, novel or even typical core materials designed for gifted students. After 3 years in the program, the student would be exposed to more than a mere potpouri of good ideas simply chosen for being more difficult or more sophisticated in terms of their learning objectives.

My goal is a sequential introduction of major concepts and new subject matter over a three year period. Reasonable allowances will be made for students to exert their individual initiative; however, the total control of the curriculum will not be turned over to them. If by the middle of the third year students have completed their

study requirements they will be free to pursue individual projects under the guidance and helping hand of the project teachers.

I have attempted to share with you the procedures, the thought processes and the decisions that had to be made in developing this project. I felt that such an explanation would help you to understand the project far better then if I had merely given you a description of the content.

The Instructional component of the program ~~is~~ the most crucial part of the project. ~~What has~~ been asserted ~~on~~ a theoretical ~~level~~ ~~must~~ stand up to practical demonstration.

I have tried to blend what I consider to be the three most important strategies in education today. They are:

1st. Mastery Teaching as developed by Madeline Hunter from UCLA

2nd. The Confluent Theory of Education as interpreted by Tom Yeoman from the University of Calif. at Santa Barbara

3rd. The implications of the Right and the Left Hemisphere of learning on instructional modalities.

Mastery Teaching is a scientific approach to education. It emphasizes Blooms Taxonomy of the cognitive levels of learning. This knowledge and the ability to utilize it in the classroom is a prerequisite for working with all students but even more so with the gifted. The basic assumption of this methodology is that once a teacher has mastered each step, significant results will follow.

Confluent Education integrates the affective with the cognitive domain of learning. The most viable model and conceptaulization of this strategy was developed by Tom Yeoman. He explains that in Confluent Education there is an integration of the "intrapersonal" with the "interpersonal" and the "extrapersonal" realities or experiences

common to all learners.

The inner circle "intrapersonal" is what the person as a unique individual experiences within himself, e.g. his self-concept, self-esteem, his need for self-identity and personal acceptance.

This personal reality of the individual is of utmost importance because this inner experience determines how he will interact with other individuals in his environment. It is in this "intrapersonal" level that we must consider the uniqueness of our Bilingual students. I think it is accurate and quite honest to admit that these students have experienced their culture and hence themselves with some very ambivalent feelings. I believe we must deal with this level of their needs before we begin to deal with pure academics as such.

A correct understanding of Ethnic difference is very important in working with Bilingual students. It helps us to understand their interests and what motivates them. It helps us to understand their manner of reacting and interacting with their environment.

The second circle is self-explanatory. It is the sphere of interaction with people in the immediate environment - parents, teachers, friends, etc.

The third circle the "extrapersonal" is the sphere of interaction with the community at large. It is this 3rd circle of interaction which has occupied educational interest and effort. Traditionally, education has focused on the sum total of what the learner needs to know to function in society. The scope of Confluent Education is broader. It is the effort to foster the soul and the spirit of the learner while nurturing his intellect.

The significance of the research that has been done on the Right and Left Hemisphere of learning is also important in Bilingual Education.

Instruction has traditionally relied upon verbal and abstract methods of teaching. It is logical and even necessary to utilize activities directed more to the Right Hemisphere of the brain.

Again I single out our Bilingual student in this respect -- not because he can't handle abstract thinking but because in many respects some of these students have a natural adaptability for the Right Brain modality of learning. These three strategies of learning can be summarized briefly. The first two are directed at the cognitive and affective development of the gifted student. The third strategy is used to accommodate and develop the various styles of student learning. In conclusion so I will say only a few words about the role of the teacher in education as I came to see it while working on my project. On some scripts it is perhaps the most important part of the project.

The demands of an ever changing world create a challenge for even the most competent and dedicated teacher. Now more than ever before the education of young people and especially the gifted requires an expertise far beyond old skills and information learned long ago. The teacher is the keystone in the educational process. She is the catalyst for what happens. Bearing this in mind, the project teacher must make a committment to on-going education. Their competency must include much more than intuition and well-intentioned strivings.

The final component of the project addresses this need by making opportunities available for continued professional development of the teachers.

Although time has not permitted a more thorough and complete explanation of this project I hope one thing has been clear. The project is dedicated to excellence in education of the gifted. I do

not believe this ambition is beyond achievement. I do not believe it is an impossible dream!